

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02828 141456Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-07 NSC-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00
EB-07 TRSE-00 SS-15 /047 W
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R 141339Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4292
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2828

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, SA, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN-SAUDI RIVALRY IN LEBANON

1. AS REPORTED IN BEIRUT 2785, FOREIGN MINISTER
BOUTROS IN OUR JUNE 10 CONVERSATION PINPOINTED
SYRIAN-SAUDI RIVALRY FOR INFLUENCE IN LEBANON AS
ONE REASON SAUDIA WERE NOT FORTHCOMING WITH
FINANCIAL HELP. PRESIDENT SARKIS, IN CONVERSATION

JUNE 13, REFERRED TO SAME COMPETITION AS BEING FACTOR
DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD, RATIONALE
BEING THAT SAUDIS WOULD NOT WANT TO HELP SYRIANS
IMPROVE THEIR POSITION IN LEBANON BY ELIMINATING
PALESTINIAN OPPOSITION. PUBLISHER OF AN-NAHAR
GHASSAN TUENI DWELT AT LENGTH ON SAME THEME
DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION JUNE 13. TUENI, WHO
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HAD SEEN PRESIDENT JUST BEFORE I DID, SAID THAT
SAUDI RELUCTANCE FINANCE RECONSTRUCTION OF
LEBANON, WHICH WOULD FACILITATE TASK OF SYRIANS,
WAS WELL ESTABLISHED. HE SAID SAUDIS FELT
MAINTENANCE OF ORDER IN LEBANON ONE THING AND
STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL BAATH PARTY SOMETHING
ELSE. HE NOTED THAT LOCAL BAATH PARTY LEADER ASSEM

KANSOU HAD CALLED FOR UNIFICATION OF LEBANON AND SYRIA IN RALLY IN BEIRUT ON JUNE 12.

2. WHEN I ASKED TUENI WHAT EVIDENCE HE HAD OF THIS RIVALRY, HE SAID SAUDIS WERE MOVING IN VARIETY OF WAYS TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES AS AN INFLUENTIAL FORCE IN LEBANON. THEY WERE WITHHOLDING MONEY. THEY WERE AT SAME TIME INVITING SOME 20 LEADING LEBANESE PERSONALITIES TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA. WE WOULD SEE OTHER SIGNS. (ONE OF THEM MAY BE THE FREE FOOD DEPOT SAUDIS HAVE SET UP DOWN THE STREET NEXT TO RIVIERA HOTEL. THEY ARE TRUCKING FOOD IN FROM ALL OVER AND PASSING IT OUT TO THE NEEDY, JUST AS THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS PHASING OUT ITS RELIEF PROGRAM.)

3. SAUDI-SYRIAN RIVALRY IS NOT NEW THEME, BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE SHARPENED IN PAST SIX WEEKS. BOUTROS AND SARKIS, FOR INSTANCE, HAVE NOT MENTIONED IT TO ME BEFORE. WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS OF DAMASCUS AND JIDDA.

4. WITH REGARD TO FINANCIAL AID, PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS TOLD ME NIGHT OF JUNE 11 THAT SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS WERE GOING TO HONOR COMMITMENT THEIR RESPECTIVE FUNDS HAD MADE TO FINANCE SPECIFIC PROJECTS IN LEBANON. THEY WERE, HOWEVER, DRAGGING THEIR FEET ON PROVIDING FUNDS TO REFLOAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THIS IS SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN PRESS STATEMENTS HAD LED US TO BELIEVE.
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PARKER

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Sent Date: 14-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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